United Nations A/54/789

General Assembly

Distr.: General
10 March 2000

Original: English

Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 20 (b)
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Letter dated 7 March 2000 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to enclose herewith a letter from Mustafa Osman Ismail, Minister of External Relations of the Republic of the Sudan to you, regarding the expulsion of the humanitarian non-governmental organizations working in the southern Sudan by the rebel movement Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated to all members of the United Nations as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 20 (b).

(*Signed*) Elfatih **Erwa**
Permanent Representative

00-33711 (E) 100300

Annex

Letter dated 6 March 2000 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Sudan addressed to the Secretary-General

It is with a sense of grief and indignation that I bring to your attention the fact that, on Friday 3 March 2000, the rebel movement expelled around 12 reputable international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from the Sudan, mainly from areas under the control of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

SPLA, after failing to impose conditions aimed at affecting the impartiality of the NGOs in fulfilling their cherished humanitarian role in the south, has acted to effect the repatriation of more than 200 employees from various NGOs to Nairobi. This decision will endanger the lives of thousands of Sudanese citizens already facing famine in the areas controlled by SPLA.

This serious decision by SPLA is further blatant proof, yet again, of the obstacles that SPLA uses in order to impede humanitarian activities, as referred to in the report issued by the Secretariat last year on Operation Lifeline Sudan such as the imposition of taxes and the denial of access to relief convoys by SPLA.

The irresponsible position of SPLA, which defied all the appeals made by the members of the donor community, confirms once again the persistent violation of international humanitarian law by SPLA, notably the tripartite agreement organizing Operation Lifeline Sudan and the additional agreements and protocols signed between the Government of the Sudan, the United Nations and the rebel movement addressing relief access and safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

The Government of the Republic of the Sudan, committed to the safety and welfare of all Sudanese people, whether in Government-controlled areas or in rebel-held areas, and fully aware of the negative and catastrophic impact of such a decision, has invited all those NGOs expelled by SPLA to launch their humanitarian activities from Khartoum.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that the Government of the Sudan will continue to honour its commitments through Operation Lifeline Sudan to provide the necessary needs of food and medicine to all citizens affected by the war.

While informing you of this inhuman decision by SPLA, which was also condemned by many members of the donor community, we would appreciate it if the Secretariat would express its condemnation of the position of SPLA.

Mustafa Osman **Ismail**
Minister of External Relations